

C-J Sports

Abbey leaves winning legacy at Mooney

Retiring coach won titles, friendships in 13-season career

By Richard A. Kiley

Many of Joette Abbey's 13 seasons as coach of the girls' varsity softball and volleyball teams at Cardinal Mooney High School ended on winning notes as was evidenced by the softball team's victory last June in the sectional championship game against top-seeded Hilton.

This summer, the personable physical education teacher at Mooney decided to bring her coaching days to an end.

Fittingly, Abbey went out with a victory in her last game as a coach, but regardless of the outcome of the classic matchup against Hilton — everybody's pick this year to take the girls' crown in softball — she would have gone out a winner both on and off the baseball diamond or volleyball court.

The impressive record she compiled during the past 13 seasons is a testament to her coaching ability. In volleyball, Abbey's record was 166-55, which includes eight league championships. The Cardinals finished second in the remaining five campaigns.

As impressive as Mooney volleyball teams were, though, the Cardinal softball teams were even more so. Included in Abbey's 153-50 record on the diamond were six league championships and two sectional titles. During her tenure at Mooney, Abbey's softball teams made it to the sectional finals four times.

Overall, with the exception of her second season as volleyball coach, Abbey led all of her teams to winning records.

Even though Abbey readily admitted enjoying the successes she achieved as a coach, she noted that winning the respect and friendship of the players she guided meant much more.

"I'm really going to miss working with the kids at this level; this decision was very hard for me," said Abbey, who will continue to teach physical education at the Greece high school. "But coaching takes a great deal of time, and I'd like to pursue other things right now."

Abbey said she has been considering resigning from her coaching duties for the past couple of years, but always delayed her decision "because of all the great kids that were there (at Mooney)."

"This decision was so hard for me because there is something unique about every group of kids I coach," Abbey said.

Regular spectators could easily perceive the rapport Abbey enjoyed with her team. During both game and practice situations, she could often be seen joking and laughing with her players. Unlike some successful coaches who use fear as a motivator, Abbey knew how to walk the fine line between being a coach and a friend to many of her players.

"Out there (on the field) it's sport; it's fun. These kids are all out to have fun. They're teenagers," she said. "And I like to have fun myself. If it isn't fun, you shouldn't be out there."

"I would get frustrated, but even then I wouldn't get mad. The only time I would raise my voice with them was when I saw they weren't playing to their potential," she continued. "But I've always been pretty easy going, and they knew that. They knew I could be their



Like the athletes who competed for her during 13 seasons, Abbey liked to have fun and could often be seen joking with them during game situations.

friend ... they knew I was there for them."

Abbey came to Mooney by accident. The Brockport graduate was originally assigned to do her student teaching at Kendall High School in the spring of '74, but was re-assigned to Mooney after officials at Kendall decided they had enough student teachers there already.

Soon thereafter, Abbey applied for and landed a permanent job at Mooney. She then decided to take on two coaching posts as well to make up for not having been able to play organized sports at Brockport. "I had to work to put myself through school, so I didn't have any time to play anything."

Abbey made up for lost time with her teams at Mooney. She freely admitted, however, that the first few seasons were the toughest ones of all.

"Here I am starting teaching at 21, and I'm working with kids 17 and 18 years old, telling them what to do and how to do it. I was definitely more nervous then, but the years of experience have taken care of that."

Even as a young coach, Abbey took a "one day at a time" approach.

"Kids would come into the season and say 'We're going to win sectionals,' but I never had that attitude," Abbey said. "I told them to take things one game at a time. You look for the league first and then worry about the sectionals."

"They (the sectionals) were a whole other season; they were the kids' part of the season. How badly they wanted it (to win) determined how they did in sectionals."

In two of the past three softball seasons, Abbey's players have won it all. Not surprisingly, those seasons stand out above the rest in the eyes of the former Cardinal coach.

"Both sectional wins had special meaning to me. The first one was (special) because it was the first, and this year was special because nobody thought Mooney would do it ... Every-



Even in her authoritative position as a coach, Abbey was a friend to many of those who played for her.

thing was Hilton this and Hilton that?"

Abbey said she was glad that former junior varsity softball coach Paul Forte has agreed to coach the varsity, and she is confident Mooney's winning ways will continue.

"He's an excellent coach ... very competent. He worked well with the kids (when he had them on the JV)," she said.

Forte should pick up where Abbey left off. He has worked with her on the junior-varsity level for six years and knows how to deal with the pressure brought on by winning consis-

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Hazy, hot, hectic summer for diocesan athletic directors

It hasn't exactly been a restful summer for athletic directors at a few of the Catholic high schools in the diocese. "Hectic" would probably best describe the past two and a half months for some athletic department heads, who have been scurrying to fill vacant coaching posts for the upcoming scholastic seasons.

Several coaching changes took place at Aquinas Institute over the summer. This fall, Greg McMaster will take the helm of the girls' varsity soccer team for Mary Beth Sadler, who is on maternity leave. McMaster is a graduate of Cardinal Mooney, and also teaches and coaches the boys' varsity swimming program at Mooney.

Michael Flynn will step into McMaster's former spot as coach of the junior-varsity girls' soccer program at the Dewey Avenue high school.

The junior varsity boys' soccer program will also have a new coach this fall in Dean Fragnito, a recent graduate of Aquinas. Ed Benson will join Chris Battaglia and his staff on the Aquinas varsity football team this year, and Bob D'Ettore will be the new head coach of the junior-varsity grid team. D'Ettore assistant will be Keith Knight.

Tom Mancarella, another graduate of Aquinas, is a new addition to the coaching staff for freshmen football at AQ.

Cardinal Mooney Athletic Director Ed Nietopski has also been busy this summer trying to replace Joette Abbey's girls' varsity volleyball post as well as Sue Chinkel's position as coach of the girls' varsity swim team.

Last year, Chinkel, a Long Island native, guided Mooney in its first-ever girls' swimming season. Nietopski has filled Abbey's spot with Paul Forte, but he is still looking

for new volleyball and swim coaches.

Stan Cipura, a physical education instructor at Mooney, has also left for a similar position at Caledonia-Mumford High School.

DeSales High School athletic director Steve Muzzi recently announced that Mike Rood will take over the vacancy left by former varsity girls' soccer coach Mack Spelley, who left to take on the varsity girls' soccer coaching position at Waterloo High School.

Tim Jordan, athletic director at McQuaid Jesuit High School, has been spending some of his summer vacation busily looking for a junior varsity soccer coach. With the start of the soccer season just weeks away, the private high school on Clinton Avenue is still looking to fill the post, which was left by Dan Schied. Schied will be coaching the Knights' varsity team this fall.

McQuaid is also in the process of finding someone to coach the new lacrosse program.

Sports Shorts

Racing for Jerry's kids

The 5th annual Citibank/Muscular Dystrophy Association race is scheduled for Sunday, September 6, at 10 a.m. It will begin at the Citibank's headquarters, 99 Garnsey Road in Perinton.

The cost for the five-mile race is \$6 in advance and \$8 the day of the race.

Business and organizational teams are invited to compete in the Citibank/MDA Corporate Team Challenge. Each team must have three to five participants, and the deadline for team registration is August 29.

Post-race entertainment will be provided by WCMF-96.5 FM. Citibank/MDA running shirts will be given to the first 500 entrants. All proceeds from the race will be donated to the Muscular Dystrophy Association during the Labor Day telethon.

Entry forms and registration information are available at all Citibank branches or by calling (716) 352-5760.

Knights to remember

A basketball dynasty may be in the making at McQuaid Jesuit High School.

Even without the services of Greg Woodard — who was playing in the Empire State Games — members of the defending Section 5 champion Knights cruised to a 25-point win over Webster in the championship game of the Penfield Recreation Department's Youth Summer Basketball League. The game took place on Friday, July 31, at Penfield High School.

In what may be a sign of things to come, the Knights — who were eliminated in this year's state tourney by Buffalo's Nichols High School — were led upfront by Scott Martzloff and Drew Henderson, a transfer student from Harley-Allendale Columbia.

McQuaid advanced to the summer league's title game with playoff victories over Geneseo and Wilson, while Webster made it to the finals by beating Fairport and Livonia.

League play began on June 22, with 16 high school varsity basketball teams competing in a 10-game regular season schedule.

With the addition of Henderson to the Knights' already multi-faceted offensive arsenal, McQuaid may once again be the best basketball team in Section 5 this winter.

"Special-tee" tournament

The second annual Holy Childhood Ladies' Golf Tournament, which was held at the Green Hills Golf Club July 20, once again proved to be a "special tournament for special people," according to its organizers.

Overall low-gross winners of the four-woman, two-ball best-ball tournament were the team of Lynda Hedges, Judy Warren, Miggy Jameson and Elaine Forgie. First-place low-net winners were Sylvia Korn, Shirley Acker, Peg Barry and Eileen Koloseike.

Although no one was able to make a hole-in-one on the 13th hole to win a 1987 1-Mark Isuzu, Sally Fawcett came closest to the pin on the seventh hole, garnering a gold putter. The contest for the longest drive was won by Patsy Kavanaugh, who launched the ball 230 yards.

The real winners of the day, however, were the children at Holy Childhood. The tourney raised more than \$10,500 for the agency's Children's Program. According to Gail H. Biemiller, director of development at School of the Holy Childhood, funds raised will help enable the school to continue offering an educational program for the mentally handicapped students.

Bowlers needed

Do you have any spare time? The Holy Family Thursday-Night Ladies Bowling League is in need of bowlers. Two full teams are needed for the upcoming season, which runs from September 10 through April 7. The group bowls at the church recreation center, on the corner of Rochester's Ames and Jay streets, on Thursday evenings, with alternating early and late shifts.

Those interested in joining the group should contact Mary Ann Walter at (716) 436-8878 after 5:30 p.m.